

HOUSING MANAGEMENT BULLETIN

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FURNISHED DWELLING UNITS DISPLAYED

Members of the Management Review Division of the United States Housing Authority spend a good deal of time in the field consulting with the managers of local housing projects, giving valuable suggestions and advice.

Miss Martha Rogin, Home Economist on the staff, has had occasion to visit many government projects within recent months, to discuss family budgets, rentals, etc. She has also been concerned with the problems of home furnishing which families of low income face when moving into new projects. In the following paragraphs Miss Rogin describes two interesting recent experiments in setting up practical displays of furnished dwelling units in low-rent housing developments:

Purpose of Displays

"When the construction of a low-rent housing project is sufficiently completed to permit inspection, it is highly desirable to open one or more typical dwelling units to the public. The value of these visits will be greatly enhanced if the units on display are furnished so that prospective tenants and other visitors will be able to visualize the dwellings as they will look when actually occupied. Carefully planned display units should demonstrate to families of limited means how attractive and harmonious results in furnishing a home -- not necessarily provided by the purchase of new and expensive articles -- may be achieved.

"If developed during the period of initial tenant selection, such displays tend to deter families from incurring heavy indebtedness for goods purchased on the installment plan. Experience has shown that this is a problem to be safeguarded against when low income families move from slum conditions to new and modern homes. To accomplish this end, second-hand furniture should be utilized

for the most part, combined with only such new articles as may be home-made or purchased at a very low cost.

"Housing managers will find the services of home economists connected with various family welfare agencies, both public and private, teachers and supervisors of home economics at different educational levels, and home economics specialists in the extension service of state colleges and parent education associations, invaluable in developing suitable demonstrations of home furnishings. In addition, in some localities the cooperation of WPA staff members and facilities may be enlisted. Representatives of these agencies will be found more than willing to cooperate and in some cases, will assume complete responsibility for the direction of such an undertaking.

Detroit and . . .

"With the sponsorship of the Housing Committee of the American Association of Social Workers, the Visiting Housekeeper Association of Detroit planned and set up home furnishing demonstrations for two PWA Housing Division projects, Parkside (755 dwelling units for white families) and Brewster (701 dwelling units for Negro families) during initial occupancy. These demonstrations proved of great value to the visiting public, particularly to those families contemplating occupancy in the projects. They were, moreover, an excellent practical demonstration in community cooperation. Furniture and equipment were borrowed from Good Will Industries and from interested individuals. Volunteer groups of college, church and club women acted as hostesses. The salary of a qualified assistant was met by the Visiting Housekeeper Association for the temporary period during which these services were required on a part-time basis in setting up

the displays. Other incidental expenditures were likewise met by this agency.

Minneapolis Experience

"A similar type of demonstration was developed with considerable success at Sumner Field Homes (464 dwelling units, white and Negro occupancy) in Minneapolis in conjunction with initial tenant selection. The demonstrations here consisted of furnishing two display units -- one 3-room unit and one 4-room unit -- under the direction of the Adult Education Department of the Minneapolis public school system. The major items of furniture and equipment for these displays were borrowed from Good Will Industries and individual homes. In addition, a number of 'home-made' pieces were included in one of the units to illustrate the type of furniture that might be readily constructed by the housewife and other family members. The cost of all materials used in connection with these exhibits was met by the budget of the Adult Education Department, as was the salary of the home economist especially engaged to carry out the details of this 'Home-Making Project'.

"Specialists on the staff of the Home Economics Department of the University of Minnesota were consulted in planning the display units for Sumner Field Homes and the services of sewing women, carpenters, handicraft specialists and others on various WPA projects were extensively used in reconditioning the furniture, making curtains, etc. When opened to the public these demonstrations had the added advantage of a guide service by NYA students who were carefully trained to answer accurately specific questions concerning the displays. A free consultation service in home furnishings was also offered to individual homemakers. Attractive mimeographed leaflets were distributed announcing the time and place at which this service was available as well as other facts of interest.

"A model home, supplemented by the services of a trained consultant to assist individual families in their problems of home furnishings, as described here is much better than the usual commercial display. It serves a worthwhile educational purpose not only to prospective tenants of a low-rent housing project but to the community as a whole. It also tends to promote a natural integration of project and community interests from the outset."

Numerous projects have made available instruction to tenants in the use of equipment after they moved in.

SUPPLEMENTARY FIELD NOTES

The Editors are pleased to submit the following information, which Mr. J. S. Rafferty, Manager of Laurel Homes, Cincinnati, feels would be valuable in correcting impressions given in the Field Notes on page 10 of the April 29 BULLETIN. It should be noted that NAHO's field representatives misinterpreted the nature of the management's dissatisfaction with the Laurel Homes' nursery school program:

"We feel that the leadership of our nursery schools is entirely satisfactory and that both nursery schools, one for white children and one for colored children, are very successful. WPA has done a fine job in providing us with leadership for these nursery schools. The thing we question about the nursery schools is the providing of so much leadership facilities and supervision for an enrollment limited to 25 children. We feel that we must, within a very short time, begin to reach a much larger percentage of nursery school aged children. At the present we have two schools limited to a total enrollment of 50, while we have approximately 270 children from 2 to 4 years of age at the project.

Disinfestation

The following information indicates that hazards to asphalt tile resulting from the use of liquid disinfectants may be minimized:

"Where we have used Chlorpicrin gas for fumigating as we have whenever a family moves into the project, we have had no trouble. However, it is well known that even where fumigation upon occupancy is 100% effective, there must be constant follow-up due to vermin brought into the project by visitors or by tenants after visiting outside the project. Some of our follow-up is done by use of sprays or atomizers dispersing a fine vapor of liquid fumigant into the air directly on the article we are fumigating. Our difficulty with the tile floor has occurred in connection with the use of this liquid fumigant. Wherever a drop of this liquid falls upon the tile floor, it softens the tile (but does not loosen the tile from its base).

"Since the visit of your field representatives, we have found improved diffusers and sprays which have minimized this problem and which appear to be the solution for the time being."

HOUSING MANAGEMENT COURSE OFFERED

A course of training in housing management will be given this summer by New York University. The Committee on Training of NAHO's Housing Managers' Division has advised the University in the development of the course.

The course will be held for a four-week period — from July 24th to August 18th — and will be divided approximately equally between lectures and field work in large-scale housing projects in full operation. The following will be eligible for attendance:

(a) Members and staff employees of local housing authorities; (b) Persons recommended by the authorities as possible future employees, both in management and in other phases of their work; (c) Those actively interested in large-scale housing developments undertaken by private, limited-dividend companies, cooperatives, the Farm Security Administration, and other private, public, or semi-public agencies.

All applications for admission will be passed upon by a committee. The fee for the course, which will include all university

charges for instruction and supervision of field work, has been fixed tentatively at \$50.00. The sessions will consist of lectures and discussion on the following subjects: housing as a major socio-economic problem; current thoughts on the relation of housing to health, delinquency, and other major social problems; the history of the housing movement in the United States prior to 1934; the history of the housing movement in the United States after 1934; the United States Housing Act; the aims and purpose of management; the management department; tenant selection; management problems prior to opening of a project; administrative procedures; service and maintenance problems; housing management abroad; community activities in housing; human relations in the project; children in a housing project; management as a profession.

The third of NAHO's own management training institutes originally planned for this June has been postponed until September or later in order to permit the appointment of more principal management employees by local housing agencies. In contrast to the N.Y.U. course, the NAHO institute will be open only to top management personnel that are on active duty or have been officially appointed.

ENGLISH TENANTS OPPOSE DIFFERENTIAL RENTING

Those few American low-rent projects that have been occupied for some years are beginning to experience difficulty due to fluctuations in tenants' income or family size from the level that originally qualified a family as acceptable for occupancy. There has been much discussion, but probably no application, of differential renting as a means of meeting these difficulties. It is interesting, therefore, to note the following news note from the June 1 Bulletin of the Housing Centre, London:

"Birmingham Corporation tenants who have gone on strike and refused to pay their rent, as a protest against the city's differential rent scheme, today received the full official support of the National Council of Corporation Tenants' Association at its emergency conference. The conference was called on to check all local authorities from operating such schemes." Manchester Guardian, 25.5.39.

"The seriousness of the recent rent strikes such as the one referred to above cannot be overestimated. Whether or not the drastic measure of a 'rent strike' is a

justifiable means of overcoming any grievance, it seems certain that the present opposition to 'differential renting' is based on a misunderstanding of housing policy.

Circumstances in Birmingham

"The circumstances of the case are briefly as follows. Like many other corporations, Birmingham is concerned that many of the tenants now living in subsidized houses are no longer in need of assistance from public and local funds. On the other hand there are a great many tenants on the estates who find it hard enough to make ends meet, even with the subsidies which are being paid on the houses. There is the further complication that the corporation houses have been built under a great variety of post-war housing acts, and the rents vary without any clear relationship to the quality and suitability of the accommodation. In these circumstances, the Council decided to take advantage of the Housing Act, whereby they are empowered to pool the subsidies on all schemes and redistribute them on the basis of actual need. This is a logical, though tardy, method of fulfilling a principle which should be fundamental to state-assisted housing, namely

that subsidies are intended to help those who cannot afford to pay economic rents. This axiom has been admirably summarized by Mr. Geoffrey Wilson in his N.F.R.D. pamphlet on 'Rent Rebates' (1/-). 'The basic principle of differential rent rebates is that those tenants who can afford it, should pay the full economic rent and receive no assistance from the public purse, while those who cannot afford to pay the economic rent, even after it has been lowered to the maximum extent possible by the application of the full subsidy, should receive further assistance in the form of rent relief, varying in amount with their means and needs.'

The Tenant's Objections

"Here are some of the main 'objections' raised by the Tenants Associations against the scheme.

"(1) It involves another 'means test'. It is certainly true that the scheme depends on the tenants' supplying information to the authorities regarding their means. Such questionnaires are involved in the case of 'income tax' and may be reasonably expected in the case of 'differential renting.' Public money is being contributed towards the rents of all subsidized houses and the local authority is only anxious to see it allocated to those who require it.

"(2) The better-off tenant is paying the rent of his poorer neighbor. This is not the case. At the most he is paying the economic rent of his house and no more, thereby leaving public money available to help the poorer tenant to pay his rent.

"(3) Hardship is involved. Differential renting is intended to relieve and does relieve necessitous cases. The raising of rents is only involved in the case of families who can afford to pay either the full economic rent or a greater proportion of it than hitherto.

"Although many of the objections to differential renting appear to be unfounded, it is certainly true that much depends on the way it is introduced and administered. The principles of the system must be explained carefully, if possible in person, and questionnaires must not be arbitrarily circulated without careful preparation. With untrained rent collectors, difficulties are likely to arise."

The BULLETIN would be glad to learn of any plans or practices of local housing authorities involving the utilization of differential renting as employed in England or in some modified form.

GENERAL NEWS NOTES

The Buffalo Housing Authority has officially announced rental schedules for its three new developments, as follows:

No. of Rooms		No. of Persons Min. Max.	Rent	Utilities	Total Rent
2	1 Bedroom, Kitchenette.....	2 2	\$12.00	\$6.00	\$18.00
2½	1 Bedroom, Kitchenette.....	2 2	12.25	6.25	18.50
3	1 Bedroom, Kitchen.....	2 3	12.50	6.50	19.00
3½	1 Bedroom, Kitchen, Dinette.....	2 3	12.75	6.75	19.50
3½	2 Bedrooms, Kitchenette.....	3 4	13.50	7.00	20.50
4	2 Bedrooms, Kitchen.....	3 4	13.50	7.50	21.00
4½	2 Bedrooms, Kitchen, Dinette (Apt.)	3 4	13.50	7.75	21.25
4½	2 Bedrooms, Kitchen, Dinette (Row House)	3 5	13.75	7.75	21.50
5	3 Bedrooms, Kitchen, (Apt.)	4 6	13.50	8.50	22.00
5½	3 Bedrooms, Kitchen, Dinette (Row House)	4 7	13.75	8.75	22.50

Play Space Surfacing

The best surface for children's play spaces, Mr. Carleton Sharpe of Greenhills believes, is moulders' sand. Mr. Sharpe also states that they use tanbark for small areas under swings and similar apparatus where the children most often fall down, to lessen the number of serious scratches and bruises. The Health Department in Indianapolis, however, is reported against the use of tanbark for this purpose, claiming that it is apt to cause infection. Sharpe says that they have had no complaints on this score.

Active New York Committee

The Committee on Housing Management of the New York Citizens' Housing Council completed in May an exhibit on planning for low cost management. This has been shown at the New York Architectural League, Columbia University, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington.

Studies on why tenants move and the relationship between civil service and housing management personnel are being conducted by the Committee.

Tenants of the three Chicago public projects recently sponsored a special performance of "One Third of a Nation".

DISTRIBUTION POLICY ON BULLETIN

The HOUSING MANAGEMENT BULLETIN is distributed to members of NAHO who have signified their desire to receive it for a trial period. Copies are available to non-members only by purchase of individual issues at 15¢ each. It is anticipated that the BULLETIN will become shortly the official organ of the Housing Management Division of NAHO, now being organized.